



# ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

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## Kentucky students beat international averages in science and mathematics

According to a recently released study, Kentucky 8th-grade students perform better than their international counterparts in science and are on par with them in mathematics.

The study, [U.S. States in a Global Context](#), links results of the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card, with scores on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Based on U.S. NAEP scores, the study predicts student TIMSS scores and compares them with the actual TIMSS scores of students in 47 education systems around the world. In the nine U.S. states where TIMSS was given, actual scores were used to validate the study.

"This is a good yardstick on how well Kentucky students measure up to students in other states and nations," Education Commissioner Terry Holliday said. "It's important not only for those who will one day be competing for jobs, but also for Kentucky as we work to build a better educated workforce that can attract higher paying jobs and new businesses that will secure the state's economic future."

**Science:** Kentucky's average score of 534 in science beat not only the average of public school students in the United States (522) but also the TIMSS average score (500); that put Kentucky in 24th place among the state and international education systems in the study and on par with Kansas, Michigan, Indiana, Hong Kong and England. Singapore ranked

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## New members appointed to Next-Generation Student Council

Six Kentucky public high school students have been named to the Next-Generation Student Advisory Council, a group that provides input to Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday. These newly-selected members will serve for one year.

- **Nolan Calhoun** – 10th grade, Grant County High
- **Zachary Creekmore** – 11th grade, Whitley County High
- **Jiahui Hu** – 12th grade, DuPont Manual High (Jefferson County)
- **Karson Johnson** – 10th grade, Marshall County High
- **Deanie Pedigo** – 10th grade, Barren County High
- **Quincy Penn** – 11th grade, Frankfort (Independent) High

The students were selected for the council based on their responses to application questions. A Kentucky Department of Education committee scored applications on how well each student expressed his or her ideas and goals.

The six new members join five returning seniors on the council.

- **Vincent Cao** – Paul Laurence Dunbar High (Fayette County)
- **Morgan Casto** – Russell (Independent) High
- **David Hormell** – Martha Layne Collins High (Shelby County)
- **Tiffany Parham** – Murray (Independent) High
- **Guyron Spalding** – Bardstown (Independent) High

This group will meet with Holliday and KDE staff, both in person and virtually, to discuss how decisions made at the state level are affecting public school students throughout Kentucky. The group also will provide feedback from a student perspective on critical issues impacting students and schools.

The group's first meeting will be in Frankfort on Oct. 30.

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first in science with an average score of 590. The highest-scoring state was Massachusetts (567). Collectively, U.S. public school students ranked 31st.

The study also reported the performance levels of students against four international benchmarks. Nearly 80 percent of Kentucky students reached the intermediate level or above – more than 40 percent scored high or advanced.

The science benchmarks indicate what 8th graders should know and be able to do in science.

- low (400) – Students show some elementary knowledge of life, physical and earth sciences.
- intermediate (475) – Students have basic knowledge and understanding of practical situations in the sciences.
- high (550) – Students apply their knowledge and understanding of the sciences to explain phenomena in everyday and abstract contexts.
- advanced (625) – Students apply knowledge and understanding of scientific processes and relationships and show some knowledge of the process of scientific inquiry.

**Mathematics:** In mathematics, Kentucky's score of 505 put it ahead of the TIMSS average score of 500, but just below the national average for public schools (507). Kentucky's 36th place score was comparable to the scores of Hawaii, South Carolina, England, Hungary and Australia. Five education systems – the Republic of Korea (613), Singapore (611), Chinese Taipei (609), Hong Kong (586) and Japan (570) recorded TIMSS mathematics scores that were higher than the scores for any U.S. state.

The mathematics benchmarks are similar to those in science in terms of knowledge; application and understanding of knowledge; and reasoning with information, drawing conclusions, making generalizations and solving linear equations.

"This study makes a good case for why we need more rigorous academic standards for our students," Holliday said. "The Kentucky Core Academic Standards in English/language arts, mathematics and science focus on applied knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving, the same skills outlined in the international benchmarks. As our teachers become more familiar with what the standards require and build students' mastery of them, we should see Kentucky's performance on global studies like this improve."

For more than 30 years, NAEP has been the country's only nationally representative and continuing survey of students' educational achievement. The assessment is authorized by Congress and directed by the National Center for Education Statistics. NAEP does not report individual student, teacher, school or district data.

For more information on the study, click [here](#).

# Fewer Kentucky students engaging in risky behaviors, according to report

Overall, Kentucky middle and high school students are eating healthier foods and making safer choices based on data from the 2013 Kentucky Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

The YRBS monitors young adult behaviors that can impact health including alcohol and drug use; injury and violence; nutrition; physical activity; sexual behaviors; and tobacco use.

These risk behaviors contribute to the leading causes of death, disability and social problems among youth and adults in the U.S.

The Kentucky Department of Education, in partnership with the Family Resource and Youth Service Centers, administered the survey in spring 2013. Students were selected to participate in the state survey from randomly chosen middle and high schools. The anonymous surveys were voluntary, and every student could refuse to answer any question. Individual district, school or student data is not reported.

The YRBS is given every two years in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The results are used to create awareness, develop program and policies, set goals, support health-related legislation, and seek funding.

## Middle school percentages from 2011 to 2013

- Students who never or rarely wore a seat belt when riding in a car decreased from 9.8 percent in 2011 to 5.4 percent in 2013.
- Students who had ever been bullied on school property increased from 43.1 percent in 2011 to 48.9 percent in 2013.
- Students who ever seriously thought about killing themselves decreased – 19.1 percent in 2011 to 15.0 percent in 2013.
- Students who ever had a drink of alcohol other than a few sips decreased – 31.9 percent in 2011 to 26.4 percent in 2013.
- Students who ever took a prescription drug (such as Ritalin or Xanax) without a doctor's prescription increased – 4.4 percent in 2011 to 7.1 percent in 2013.
- Students who had ever gone without eating for 24 hours or more to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight decreased – 20.4 percent in 2011 to 15.9 percent in 2013.
- Students who played video games or computer games or used a computer for something that was not school work three or more hours per day on an average school day increased – 34.9 percent in 2011; to 41.4 percent in 2013.



## High school percentages from 2011 to 2013

- Students who had been electronically bullied during the past 12 months decreased – 17.4 percent in 2011 to 13.2 percent in 2013.
- Students who attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months decreased – 10.9 percent in 2011 to 7.7 percent in 2013.
- Students who ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs, decreased – 59.2 percent in 2011 to 47.1 percent in 2013.
- Students who have taken a prescription drug (such as OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, Codeine, Adderall, Ritalin or Xanax) without a doctor's prescription one or more times during their lifetime decreased – 19.0 percent in 2011 to 12.4 percent in 2013.
- Students who ever had sexual intercourse decreased – 51.8 percent in 2011 to 44.7 percent in 2013.
- Students who did not drink a can, bottle or glass of soda during the past seven days increased – 17.6 percent in 2011 to 21.7 percent in 2013.
- The percentage of students who ate breakfast on all of the past seven days increased – 29.9 percent in 2011 to 40.1 percent in 2013.

The data show that, generally speaking, the greater the risk a student is willing to take, the lower grades the student makes in school.

To view the full reports for both Kentucky middle and high school students, [click here](#). To view the comparative 2011 data, [click here](#).

For more information, contact [Stephanie Bunge](#) at (502) 564-2106, ext. 4543.





## Teachers of the year

Holly Bloodworth, center, was named the 2014 Kentucky Teacher of the Year at a recent ceremony in Frankfort. Bloodworth teaches 3rd grade at Murray (Independent) Elementary School. At left is High School Teacher of the Year Joanna Howerton Stevens, and at right is Middle School Teacher of the Year Melanie Trowel. [Click here](#) for more information on these teachers.

## Kentucky selected for pilot program to better train teachers

Gov. Steve Beshear recently announced that Kentucky has been named as one of seven states to participate in a two-year pilot program to train future teachers. See the [news release](#) for more information.

## Parents can better prepare kids with severe allergies

[Click here](#) to watch a video from [pta.org](http://pta.org) about how parents can create a safer learning environment at schools that face severe student allergies.

Information includes how parents and school staff can work together to raise awareness and chart a clear course of action in the event of an anaphylaxis emergency in the school setting.

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## Food safety tips to keep your child's Halloween safe

Halloween is an especially enjoyable time of year for children as they attend Halloween parties and go trick-or-treating in their costumes. Some candy treats and snack foods can, however, quickly spoil the fun.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health offers the following food safety tips to help children have a safe Halloween:

- Avoid having children snack while they're out trick-or-treating so that you may have a chance to inspect the contents of their treat bag. Give children a light meal or snack before they go out trick-or-treating to help prevent them from snacking.
- Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as unusual appearance, discoloration, tiny pinholes or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.
- Discard fruit and homemade treats unless you personally know their source and make sure that all fresh fruit is washed prior to eating. When in doubt, throw it out. Parents of very young children also should remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies or small toys.

Follow these tips for Halloween parties at home:

- If juice or cider is served to children, make sure the juice is pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. Juice or cider that has not been treated will be marked on the label.
- Don't taste raw cookie dough or cake batter.
- Before bobbing for apples, reduce the number of bacteria that might be present on apples and other raw fruits and vegetables by thoroughly rinsing them under cool running water. As an added precaution, use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Keep all perishable foods chilled until serving time, including cut melons, finger sandwiches, cheese platters, tossed salads, cold pasta dishes with meat, poultry or seafood and cream pies or cakes with whipped cream and cream cheese frostings. Don't leave these foods out at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Remind children to wash their hands before eating to prevent foodborne illness.
- Remember some children have food allergies, so make sure that treats with peanuts or other nuts are clearly identified.

For more questions or concerns about food safety, contact the Kentucky Food Safety Branch at (502) 564-7181.